

Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

The Rich Man and Lazarus

HIGH DIVIDEND SECURITIES

PRESSING ON!

A CONSCIENCE EDUCATED
BY TRUTH

MUSINGS OF THE EDITOR

THE COMING GLORY

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

THE JOY OF THE GODLY

Megiddo Message

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Percy J. Thatcher, Editor

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

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- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
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LETTERS

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God bless you all.

Bendairs, Mo.

Mrs. E. L. S.

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Nacoodoches, Texas

Mrs. E. C. D.

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Dear Friend:

Today in the world men are struggling to get ahead of the other fellow. Some of these will let nothing stand in their way to success. To get the true secret of success we must be at peace with God and our fellow man. We must put our trust in Him. In return God will give us something better.

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Columbus, Ohio

F. H.

A High Calling

My dear Sister:

It is indeed a privilege to belong to this royal family. I often think, how can it be that we are selected from earth's millions to be a part of this holy family? What a privilege! How we should live to be worthy of such a high calling!

We could not be engaged in a more noble work, and we must strive to become worthy of this wonderful calling. We are fortunate to have this gift bestowed upon us.

Lowville, N. Y.

A. M. Z.

Desires Questions Answered

Dear Friends:

I enjoy your magazine very much. I am sending some questions I would like to have answered. I will look for the answers in your magazine.

Yoder, Ind.

D. R.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

TODAY the great demand in the literary world is for condensed writing, topics briefed, books summarized. Men want simple facts fast, with all cumbersome accessories removed.

If ever volumes of wisdom were reduced to their most brief and simple form it is in the utterances of Jesus. He had a matchless, inimitable way of condensing great eternal truths in a few short and comprehensive sentences, and again of illustrating the Father's plan of salvation in such common, familiar object lessons that even a child could grasp the meaning. Thus it is in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, recorded in Luke 16: 19-31.

Why do we classify this passage as a parable, and not an actual literal occurrence? "Without a parable spake he not unto them" (Mark 4: 34).

Two Classes of People — in Life

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores" (Luke 16: 19-21).

These two characters are representative of two classes of people, both of whom partake of food that is provided on the table of the Lord. But between these two classes there is a wide contrast.

The rich man makes the better outward appearance, but his true condition as seen by God is described in Rev. 3: 17, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." The rich man did not realize his true condition; therefore he spurned that food on the Lord's table which could have benefited him.

Lazarus is described as a "beggar . . . full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table." He is hungry for the strengthening, healing bread of Heaven, for the knowledge of what must be done in order to gain salvation. It is upon this class that Jesus pronounces a blessing in Matt. 5: 6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Lazarus hungered for the crumbs that the rich man rejected. He knew that therein was a source of strength and healing. Recognizing his condition, he could say as the Psalmist (38: 5, 7), "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. . . . For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease; and there is no soundness in my flesh."

Lazarus' salvation lay in the fact that he knew he had a work to do: he knew that there was evil within, that he had sores, and that he must take the healing medicine. He was not blind to his sins and transgressions. He realized that eternal life can be gained only by eating every word of God.

Lazarus was anxious to have the excellent oil applied, of which we read in Ps. 141: 5, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." This word of truth, the words of the wise, the words of reproof and warning, are what will heal; they are the excellent oil which will cure the sores.

In verse 21 of Luke 16 we are told that dogs came and licked his sores. These were not literal dogs, but evil workers (Phil. 3: 2) that help to heal the sores by bringing trials necessary to the formation of a perfect character.

Thus we see two classes, the one self-deceived into believing himself clad in fine linen (the righteousness of saints), feasting regularly at the table of the Lord but choosing only such food as is to his liking, drinking the milk of doctrine but rejecting the strong meat of practice. This rich man is self-righteous, even as the familiar Pharisee from another of Jesus' Parables who thanked God that he was not as other men, while Lazarus parallels the humble publican who smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Throughout the day of salvation both classes are present at the Lord's table.

The Two Classes — in Death

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, . . . And the rich man also died: and he was buried in hell" (v. 22, Douay).

This carries God's divine plan a step further. Death comes to all at the end of this brief mortal life. Without discrimination, righteous and wicked alike die and are buried in hell. That is the place to bury men. The word "hell" is from the Hebrew word *sheol* and the Greek *hades*. *Sheol* is the original word used in Gen. 37: 35. There Jacob says to his sons who brought to him a false story of Joseph's death, "I will go down into the grave [*sheol*] unto my son mourning." A righteous man said he was going there. In *Cruden's Concordance* a note concerning the word "hell" reads as follows: "This word is generally used in the Old Testament to translate the Hebrew word *sheol*, which really means the place of the dead, without reference to happiness or the reverse. . . . In the New Testament the word "hell" is used to translate *hades*, generally meaning the same as *sheol*, the place of the dead." Hell is simply a place of unconsciousness, the grave, annihilation.

"The living know that they shall die" (Eccl. 9: 5). The Bible does not teach death of the body only, and survival of the soul, but that life is followed by a state of absolute unconsciousness. The Book records the death of righteous men such as Jacob, Joseph and David as well as of the wicked. So in Jesus' Parable both the rich man and Lazarus died and were buried.

The Two Classes — in the Resurrection

"The beggar . . . was carried by the angels into Abra-

ham's bosom: the rich man . . . lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (verses 23—25).

This portion of the Parable represents the condition of the faithful and the unfaithful after Judgment, on the other side of the resurrection. Some sects teach a universal resurrection; others teach that only the righteous are to be raised at Christ's coming, the wicked a thousand years later. But the Bible teaching, ever appealing to reason, is that all who have agreed to serve God, whether faithful or unfaithful, shall be brought to account, as in Dan. 12: 1, 2, "And at that time shall Michael stand up, . . . And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"; also Acts 24: 15, "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

The Parable under discussion supports this thought. Both classes are raised, to reap as they have sown; the beggar to his reward, the rich man to his punishment. The very fact that Lazarus and the rich man have regained consciousness at this point of the Parable shows that the resurrection has taken place, for "in death there is no remembrance" (Ps. 6: 5).

After the Judgment in which Christ separates the righteous from the wicked, the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats, then Lazarus is carried into Abraham's bosom, figuratively representing "a state of felicity and bliss," the Kingdom of God, the land of promise.

When the rich man sees Lazarus reap the grand reward, his torment begins; not physical torture in burning hell, but agony of mind when he sees what he has lost. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13: 28). Then the rich man shall thirst for the water which he rejected during his day of salvation. He entreats Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue, even as the foolish virgins who seek oil from the wise when too late. Then he is reminded that there is no second chance, that during his lifetime (day of probation) he was served the same food as was Lazarus, but let the precious life-giving crumbs fall to the ground uneaten, that during his lifetime he feasted and reveled in his own self-righteousness, while Lazarus scrutinized his character for every trace of evil. But now the tables are turned: Lazarus is comforted and rewarded, the rich man tormented. Sin pays its wages in the end, meager and unsatisfying. Although now the wicked may seem to triumph and prosper, while the Lazarus class lie in the dust of humility, yet, as the Wise Man said, "Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God" (Eccl. 8: 12, 13).

"And besides all this, between us and you there is a

great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (v. 26).

The decision of the Judge is final, making it forever impossible for the rich man to change his position. Then he that is unjust shall be unjust still; he which is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; and he that is holy shall be holy still (Rev. 22: 11).

Perhaps the moral of this Parable is no better drawn anywhere than in Jesus' First Sermon where He said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5: 5). Those who are meek, humble and lowly now, those who realize they know less than God and are willing to be guided by His superior wisdom, those who devote their time to critical self-examination rather than resting in placid complacency, shall ultimately reap the blessing of inheriting the earth. In the time of resurrection and judgment the nobility of their character shall be rewarded and they transported to a state of felicity and bliss—supreme ecstasy and delight in God's eternal Kingdom on earth—while the rich man looks on in bitterest remorse.

A Third Class

"Then he [the rich man] said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him [Lazarus] to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment" (vs. 27, 28).

Here we see another class, a group who have never sat at the Lord's table, nor tasted the food which He provides. This is in harmony with truth, when we take into consideration that when Christ comes only His servants, faithful and unfaithful, from Adam to His coming, are called before Him to Judgment, while the world is in ignorance of His divine law. After His coming the age-lasting gospel will be sent forth to them, as we read in Rev. 14: 6, 7, "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting [age-lasting] gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come." That will be the time when missionary work will be done on a grand scale, when all shall be caused to know the Lord, from the least to the greatest (Jer. 31: 34).

The 30th verse of Luke 16 is the key to the entire subject.

"And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent."

It says, "If one went unto them from the dead," showing it to be the other side of the resurrection. The unfaithful realize what they have lost by following their own ways, and they want the warning sent to others, that they may not follow in their evil ways and meet the same bitter fate.

This phase of the Parable belongs to the future. The vital consideration for us now is that we demonstrate our membership in the Lazarus class by seeking out and devouring with a relish every fragment of truth, the crumbs which others who are less hungry may let fall to the ground.

High Dividend Securities

IT IS only within the last few years that the average American has become security minded, that is, interested in the purchase of dividend-producing stocks. With the advent of higher wages, large bonuses, and other incentives to employees, the number of investors in stocks and bonds of various companies has risen tremendously. All this is done with one aim in mind, increased income.

There are three methods followed in assuring this aim.

First, the individual may study the stock market reports himself, and weigh the various factors entering into the investment, i. e., the age and soundness of the companies involved, their assets and liabilities, and the regularity and size of previous dividends.

Second, he may accept the advice of some friend who has been successful in this endeavor, or he may consult any one of a number of brokerage firms who specialize in the buying and selling of stocks and bonds, and give counsel concerning such transactions.

Third, an individual may choose to adopt an "Investment Plan," to which he may add regularly or at such intervals as his circumstances permit. In this plan his capital grows and the interest is plowed back for additional shares.

We find two types of investors dealing in these securities: those who buy with the one thought of having a steady, assured income, who, finding a reliable stock, retain it for an indefinite period; and those who keep in close touch with the rise and fall of the market, endeavoring to buy when the price is low, and to sell when the price advances; repeating the action as conditions seem favorable. This method has a greater element of chance, but has proved successful in many instances.

It is possible for a careful investor to realize a substantial income from securities offered to the public, but occasionally a company or corporation goes bankrupt, causing loss instead of gain to the investors.

However, there is a Company, little known to the world at large, whose stocks have been paying large dividends ever since the first share was purchased, and which gives the assurance, backed by unlimited assets, that dividends will constantly increase, not through a mere ten, twenty, or forty years, but throughout eternity. This Company is still headed by the original Founder, the Almighty God, whose counsel down through the ages has been: "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Prov. 23: 23).

The first stock offered by God's Company is "Knowledge," which one must obtain before the higher dividend securities are made available. God outlines His plan for His investors, that they may decide whether to continue with the Company or not. They are thus enabled to better "count the cost," and see if their spiritual resources are such as to enable them to carry out a long-range program of investment.

After a sufficient number of "Knowledge" shares have been acquired, the investor is introduced to the banner stock, "Faith," without which it is impossible to please God, but with which, to quote the controlling stockholder, Jesus, "all things are possible." "Faith" is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and

though offered a few shares at a time, the buyer is urged to add to his faith constantly (Heb. 11: 1; II Pet. 1: 5).

"Patience" stock is very highly recommended, and its possession brings a dividend of calmness and peace of mind that is worth more than money can buy. A goodly supply of "Patience" means self-control, and freedom from anger—that death-dealing scourge to the human race. The bonds of "Longsuffering," "Gentleness," and "Brotherly Kindness" keep increasing in value as the love and respect of friends and associates increases. Another bond which rates especially high on the Eternal's chart is "Meekness," which, together with its companion stock "Humility," has never skipped a dividend. Moses accumulated a large number of each during his lifetime, to be redeemed at the Judgment with a certificate of eternal life.

The stock of "Zeal, Unlimited" is a very valuable asset, as without its earning power, our bonds of "Love"—the keeping of God's commandments (I John 5: 3)—will cease to bear, with possible cancellation. "Temperance" (or moderation) stock is rated high by its owners, on account of its large returns even in this life. The Apostle Paul counsels: "Let your moderation [power of self-control] be known unto all men" (Phil. 4: 5).

One vital and very valuable stock which should be added at frequent intervals to your "Faith" holdings is "Virtue" (or Courage). This does not nullify the "Meekness" and "Humility" securities, but rather enhances them.

With the accumulation of "Faith" shares we become the recipients of bonus dividends of "Wisdom," or our ability to discern between worthless and sound securities increases; and as our bonds of "Perfectness" near maturity, our stock of "Hope" soars in value.

In the world there are many so-called gilt-edged securities offered today, but time, change, and decay are irresistible forces with which man is unable to cope. So to those who would lay up in store a sure foundation against the time to come we would say with the Wise Man, "BUY THE TRUTH, AND SELL IT NOT."

Do we realize, as we dwell in peaceful, quiet habitations and can lie down to rest in quietness, the great and wonderful blessings for which every heart should be filled with thankfulness and veneration? As we look upon the sorrows, the heartaches, the distress, the misery, that sweeps over the world, the inhumanity to man, we rejoice in the God-given assurance that Christ, the King of kings, is coming with power to put an end to all tyranny and unrighteousness.

We have the promise in Micah 4: 3, 4, "He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Dressing On!

SCENE IV

To the prison-lodging of the APOSTLE PAUL in a narrow street of Rome come his spiritual children with their problems, and with his understanding and wise counsel he heals their troubled hearts.

LUCIUS, the young patrician, torn between present pleasures and future glory, is taught to discern between false values and true.

In the preceding scene, TELEMACHUS, the slave of a brutal master, comes in the depths of despair, unable to see a ray of light ahead. PAUL convinces him that his soul need not be enslaved to any man; in spite of his apparently hopeless position, he can still enjoy the promised hundredfold, through the fellowship, the equality, the dignity, and the hope provided by the Christian faith. Adversities need not overcome one, but may be used for character building. Even in slavery, he can witness for Christ by honest service, by exemplary conduct, even by dying for his principles, if it comes to that.

Christ's service gives him true freedom; his master, with his superstitions, his fears and lusts, his narrow mortal horizons, is the real slave. TELEMACHUS goes away, a man once more, his chin up.

In Scene IV of the drama, the problem is Old Age and Death, the common lot of all, but never pleasant to contemplate. It is now late afternoon, and the shadows are beginning to darken the room. To the door comes MATTHEW, an aged Jewish Christian. His beard is white, his form bent, his steps feeble and halting, and his voice quavers with the weakness of extreme old age.

The soldier, evidently a gentleman at heart, springs to assist the old man to a chair. PAUL grasps his hand affectionately. After all, he and MATTHEW have a common background of race and religion; they "speak the same language."

PROBLEM— OLD AGE AND DEATH

PAUL. [*warmly*] Greetings, Brother Matthew! I have been wondering about you, and worrying a little. I'm sorry I haven't a more comfortable chair to offer you; my landlord thinks these are good enough—he doesn't have to use them.

MATT. [*surprised*] You find time to think of me—with all you have to do?

PAUL. That, brother, is part of what I have to do, isn't it? Christians *must* think of each other, since the world doesn't think much of us. It's a lovely Spring we're having, isn't it?

MATT. [*dolefully*] I guess it is; I had hardly noticed it. At any rate, it is not likely I shall ever see another, if I finish this one. I feel I am very near the end of the way.

PAUL. You have not been so well?

MATT. No. It's just all I can do to stay alive. My health is broken, my strength is gone.

PAUL. [*solicitously*] You have much pain?

MATT. Constantly. At night I wish it were morning, and in the morning I wish it were night. Life is something of a burden. If only I could work. . . . So, Brother



"in weariness and painfulness"

Paul, I have dragged myself to your door once more, seeking a word of consolation. You know, I was a Pharisee, like you—a pretty good Pharisee. I believed I had an immortal soul, and had no doubt that when I died I would go right to heaven; but you have taken away that false comfort from me.

PAUL. Not I, but Christ.

MATT. True enough. I know it is true as Solomon and Ben Sirach have said, the son of man is not immortal, and the dead know not anything.

PAUL. As Pharisees, we chose to overlook those Scriptures, didn't we?

MATT. Yes, we did. We were blind. I know this is true, and that it is just and right, for it is God's way; yet, face to face with the end of my mortal existence, I am troubled.

PAUL. [*gently*] Are you afraid, Brother Matthew?

MATT. No . . . not exactly, but I long for some certainty, some assurance. It is strange that I, to whom life is so hard to bear, should tremble as the dark closes in, but there is the old, old dread of the unknown.

PAUL. But, my brother, it is *not* the unknown. We do not have to guess at what lies beyond; it is plainly revealed, and our Lord has passed through the veil and reported back to us. Death is, as the Scriptures say, a sleep—and what is better than sleep when one is weary? It is an end to weakness and pain, an end to all the troubles and disappointments and frustrations of this earthly life. But it is not the end—no, no; for we have the blessed assurance that our vile, mortal, decaying body shall be changed; this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption.

MATT. In the Resurrection, we are taught.

PAUL. In the Resurrection, we *know*. I have known, brother, that you have your troubles with doubts of the resurrection of the body—is it not true?

MATT. Yes, it is true. My relatives, of course, are Sadducees, and they argue that such things do not happen, and that it is not Scriptural. I try to resist these doubts, but they keep coming back.

PAUL. [*with intensity, his eyes glowing*] Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? At the very heart of our faith is the risen Christ. Take that away, and we have nothing left—no hope. The Christian movement is not founded upon a myth. He who met a funeral procession coming out of the city of Nain, stopped it in the street, and brought back from death a widow's son—He who called out of a festering grave the decaying body of Lazarus—He who was Himself dead and is alive for evermore—can we not believe His promise; "I will raise him up at the last day"?

Here is Someone who knows what He is talking about. Here is One speaking with authority. He has done it for others already. He has experienced it in His own body. He has done it . . . He can do it again.

Because He rose from the dead, we need have no fears of the darkness. "Be not afraid," He said, "only believe. He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. As Pharisees, we professed to believe in the Resurrection—remember?

MATT. True, and I wonder that we, as sensible men, could have been so confused. With an immortal soul, what need of a Resurrection?

PAUL. It is truly amazing, yet the confusion is so deeply rooted that it will probably take the coming of the Lord to clear away the darkness. But we who know the facts can go to rest in full assurance of faith that the words of Job will be fulfilled in us: "I know that my Redeemer liveth,—"

MATT. "—and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." A blessed promise. But Job also said, "If I wait, the grave is mine house; I have made my bed in the darkness." How long will this waiting be? Do you think the Day is near?

PAUL. The waiting for us, Matthew, will be long; many centuries must pass and many things be fulfilled. The Spirit reveals to me, as I wrote to Thessalonica, that there will come a great falling away from the Truth, a complete apostasy, with all nations turned from the truth to fables. For more than a thousand years there will be no light, for no one will be willing to bear it aloft or walk by it; but in the last days there will be a restoration. A great leader will appear to raise up the truth from the dust and prepare a people to meet the Lord.

MATT. Some are saying that you teach the coming of Jesus is at hand.

PAUL. [*wearily*] I know it. I have fought this rumor with all my power, but it will not die. It is a false report, Matthew, utterly false.

MATT. They say you wrote to Corinth, "We shall not all sleep."

PAUL. True, but who are *we*? That *we*, as I meant it, is the whole body of believers, including the remnant of the last days—all honor to them! They are our brethren, although not yet born; it was for them I wrote, "We shall not all sleep." As for us—you and I and all this generation—barring the miracle of a translation like Elijah's, which is not likely, we must all take our place in the silent halls of the "house appointed for all living."

MATT. There to wait out the weary centuries.

PAUL. Why speak of weary centuries? In death there is no consciousness of time, long or short; the next moment after death is the Resurrection. You know these things, Matthew, if you will stop to think.

MATT. Still, death is an enemy—the last enemy that shall be destroyed.

PAUL. Yes, because it ends all opportunity for improvement. But if the improvement has been made, if our work is done, we can meet the enemy without fear, even greet him as a friend. This has been my constant aim ever since the Lord Jesus apprehended me on the Damascus road: to work out my salvation and be able to say at the end of the road, which may be closer to me than to you, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

MATT. I have no doubt of your crown. But what about those of us who may have unfinished work and no more time or strength to do it?

PAUL. God is just and merciful, Matthew, far beyond any justice or mercy of man's conception. He will give us time enough, if we use it, and He will reward every man according to his work, a reward far beyond what we can imagine, far beyond what we can ever earn. Can we not rest the future in His hands, having done all we can do? Death, if it comes, is an interlude; the best is yet to be, the better life for which this brief one was made. Then, brother, we shall know the joy of life and labor and activity, world without end.

MATT. [*rising painfully, assisted by SOLDIER, and taking PAUL's hand*] Brother Paul, you have helped me more than I can tell. I can see that so long as I have breath and the use of my mind, I can still work—work with myself; I can grow in faith and patience and acceptance of the will of God; and I can try to help others by my example. Whatever time is left me, I shall use. My fear is gone; now I have hope.

PAUL. Let us pray that we may both endure faithful to the end, to gain the crown of life.

[*They fold their hands and bow in prayer as the curtain falls.*]

Next Issue: A VISION OF THE FUTURE.

Secret Springs

HOW fortunate we are that we have the secret spring from which we can draw the life-giving water, the same spiritual drink that all the faithful of old drank!

Our secret spring contains water sufficient to overcome every trial by which we might be confronted. If we become discouraged, we can think of the courage of Paul and Silas as they sang praises to God at midnight; of Paul's defense before King Agrippa, of his complete command of the situation on the sinking prison ship; of Jesus as He fearlessly faced Pilate and the angry mob that took His life; of the persecutions of Jesus and the apostles as they went from city to city preaching, often in the face of open opposition. If we shrink from unfair criticism, we can think of the boldness of Peter and John, as Peter said, "We ought to obey God rather than man," and as they departed from the council "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

If we feel alone in the world, surrounded and almost overcome by them, we can remember that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them," and are not "they that be with us more than they that be with them"? and "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

If we get to thinking, "Is it really worth it? Is there something better than the pleasures of this life which we are giving up?" we need only to think, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," also that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

These are some of the "secret springs" we have at our command. Of course, there are many, many more to give us strength along the way.

A CONSCIENCE EDUCATED BY TRUTH

A ROUND-TABLE discussion on the meaning of conscience would probably reveal a different theory for each person present. Each concept would be based upon early training, impressions, environment, and experience. Conscience has often been thought of as a still, small voice within, that can be considered a true guide. Yet that voice may direct one to a certain course of action, while another may choose the opposite course and call it right. This all gives rise to the saying of the poet, "My conscience hath a thousand several tongues, and every tongue brings in a several tale." And so we are forced to conclude that conscience is a safe and reliable guide only as it is carefully educated and directed.

Conscience has been defined as the power or faculty which distinguishes between right and wrong, or conformity in conduct to one's conception of right and wrong. A conscience educated by truth will be guided by God's concepts of right and wrong, and by this we can all come to the same standard. For while the conscience may tell us *whether* to do right or wrong, God's law tells exactly *what* that right or wrong is.

A missionary once asked his convert what was meant by having a conscience. The elementary principle of his answer holds a lesson for us. Pointing to his heart he replied, "My conscience is a little thing in here, that stands still when I am good; but when I am bad it turns around and around, and the corners hurt very much. But if I keep doing wrong, by and by the corners wear off and it doesn't hurt any more." This is another way of saying that sin is first endured, then pitied, then embraced. By constant transgression the heart grows cold, unresponsive to truth, and the ears grow deaf to any voice, great or small. Sin may be at first pleasing, then easy, then frequent, then habitual, then confirmed; then the man is impenitent, then he is obstinate, then he is resolved never to repent, and then he is ruined. When all this is accomplished and we have forgotten God, we are ignored by Him—we are entirely forgotten by God, until the day of reckoning when sin pays its wages. This is the end of having a conscience seared over with a hot iron. It is the end of listening to the voice of man and not to the voice of God. What a contrast to another ending of which we read in I Tim. 1:5, "Now the *end* of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned."

When our hearts are soft and our ears are attuned to God's commands, sin will disturb us. That little corner of our heart will hurt and hurt until we do something about it. When we cannot feel the touch of sin or we disregard it, we are in a dangerous condition. As long as sin has attraction for us, it will linger. The little corners of the heart that were once sensitive, will then become calloused, the mind will become reprobate. On the other hand, when walking in God's fear, we will have a clear conscience. This is to judge self righteously, having our soul in one hand and the law in the other. If this balance keeps correct, our conscience will not condemn us when weighed in the balances of God.

In the natural, pain is a distress signal. The body is sending out an SOS, telling that trouble is there. In the

spiritual, when those little corners of the heart are causing distress, don't ignore it. Something is coming against that mighty law of Jehovah. Thank God that your heart is still sensitive to the touch of sin, and go to work. For the evil conscience can be cleansed away by the washing of water by the word. "Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved" said Jeremiah the prophet (4:14). "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

William Gladstone said that the disease of an evil conscience is beyond the practice of all the physicians of all the countries of all the world. Thank God, it is not so for us, for we have one greater Physician! He will remember and help as of old when He said to King Josiah, "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, . . . I have even heard thee."

Paul's admonition on the subject is sound, "Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and man." Surely a still and quiet conscience will bring a peace above all earthly dignities; yea, rather, when educated by truth it brings a peace that passeth all understanding.

Problem Number One

*It is very difficult to realize,
It is hard on our pride to admit,
But it is a fact nevertheless, that—*

The joy and happiness of our lives depends very much upon ourselves and upon the kind of persons we are, rather than upon the things that happen to us. After all, it is the kind of will we carry around with us, the attitude of our minds, and the temper of our spirit, that decides whether our lives shall be happy and hopeful, and not so much the things that come upon us.

If we are not thankful for the smallest blessing of life, we are selfish and of a discontented spirit. When we learn to rule and govern self, if we cultivate the right kind of will, we shall be able to adjust ourselves to the trials of life with some comfort and happiness no matter what the incident or trial may be. Many feel they are governed by circumstances, little dreaming that adverse circumstances can often be changed by approaching the difficulty with a Christ-like spirit. Paul said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

It is because God's law is not present in our minds that we stumble. We should always be filling the mind with grand and noble thoughts. Only by so doing shall we be able to resist the low and groveling things of this life. We have to be thinking creatures, getting our minds expanded by constantly filling them with His Word, until Truth is our delight and we will run the way of His commandments.

Remember that to be holy is to be happy. The two are convertible terms. Holiness! It is the secret and spring of the joy of angels; and the more of holiness attained on earth, the nearer and closer my walk is with God, the more of a sweet earnest shall I have of the bliss that awaits me in the holy Kingdom of God. O my soul! let it be thy sacred ambition to "be holy."

Musings of the Editor

I BELIEVE that there is no more lofty theme for the human mind to contemplate than everlasting righteousness. The sweet singer of Israel was inspired to chant, "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness" (Ps. 119: 142). With the restrictions of mortality hemming us in, limiting our days, and thwarting many of our purposes, we can scarcely grasp the meaning of the word "everlasting." But we can try. In our simple, imperfect way we imagine something everlasting to be perhaps as the waves of the ocean which beat against the strand year after year, century after century; or perhaps our feeble attempt to comprehend infinite time or infinite space clarifies and enlarges our conception of the grand word, "everlasting." To time and space, to ocean waves which break upon the shore, we can conceive no end. They are everlasting.

As unfathomably endless as these, is the Father's righteousness. It knows no termination; it cannot be interrupted; it is everlasting.

How vastly different from, how infinitely superior to, man's righteousness! Man may be righteous today, or for an hour, or a moment. But alas! the slightest interference may terminate that righteousness and change it to shameful, debasing wickedness.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus invites man to "seek . . . the kingdom of God, and *his righteousness*," which is simply to say, Seek a righteousness which is everlasting, which cannot be interrupted or suspended, regardless of the circumstances that may arise.

If we seek and secure everlasting righteousness, though we should fail of all other pursuits in this life, we have gained for ourselves the better life to come, and does anything else matter?

"Gideon's Band"

"Count Me the swords that have come."

"Lord, thousands on thousands are ready."

"Lo, those are too many! and with them are some
Whose hearts and whose hands are not steady.
He whose soul does not burn,
Let him take up his tent and return."

"Count Me the swords that remain."

"Lord, hundreds on hundreds are daring."

"Those yet are too many for Me to attain
To the victory I am preparing.
Lead them down to the brink
Of the waters of *Marah* to drink."

"Lord, those who remain are but few,
And the hosts of the foe are appalling!
And what can a handful such as *we* do?"

"When ye hear from beyond My voice calling,
Sound the trump! Hold the light!
Great Midian shall melt in your sight!"

—Sel.

The Coming Glory

Sure as I live, the Lord hath said—	Num. 14: 21
My glory all the earth shall fill,	Isa. 45: 23
The living and the risen dead,	I Thess. 4: 15, 16
Yea, all that breathe shall do God's will.	Jer. 31: 34
For this our Lord hath bid us pray—	Matt. 6: 9
"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,"	Matt. 6: 10
O'er all the earth Thy scepter sway—	Ps. 72: 8
Earth's joys and heaven's shall then be one.	Rev. 5: 13
But who can find the longed-for good?	Ps. 4: 6
For sin and death through earth abound,	Rom. 5: 12
Man seeks in vain a world renewed,	Ecc. 1: 2
Where purity and bliss are found.	Rom. 8: 22
Blest be that sure prophetic word!	II Pet. 3: 2
Jesus shall come to earth again,	Acts 1: 11
Then peace and truth shall be restored,	Ps. 37: 11
Earth's rightful King o'er earth shall reign.	Zech. 14: 9
For this the saints both night and day	Rev. 5: 8
Have lifted up their earnest cry;	Luke 18: 7
Beneath the altar still they pray,	Rev. 6: 9, 10
Avenge our wrongs, O God, most high!	Luke 18: 8
The great Restorer will come forth,	Acts 3: 20
Then every eye the Lord shall see—	Rev. 1: 7
Shall spoil His foes who spoil the earth,	Jer. 30: 16
And set His captive people free.	Ps. 12: 12
The rising saints their Lord shall greet,	I Thess. 4: 17
And martyrs hail the promised day:	Rev. 20: 4
The bride shall then the Bridegroom meet,	Matt. 25: 6
And He will wipe her tears away.	Isa. 25: 8
Creation's groans no more shall rise,	Ps. 102: 20
Her bitter woes no more be feared;	Isa. 40: 9
No more ascend the mourner's cries,	Rev. 21: 4
The din of wars no more be heard.	Isa. 2: 4
Nature shall hear its Author's word,	Rev. 21: 5
In all her breadth no sin shall be;	II Peter 3: 13
And in the presence of the Lord,	Isa. 24: 23
God's watchmen eye to eye shall see.	Isa. 52: 8
In gloomy wastes where dragons lay,	Isa. 35: 7
And hissing serpents once were found,	Isa. 11: 8
The Lord shall there prepare His way,	Isa. 40: 4, 5
And healthful flowers and fruit abound.	Isa. 35: 1, 2
The veil upon the nations spread,	Isa. 25: 7
Shall then be lost in perfect day;	Isa. 60: 20
Reproaches on the righteous laid	I Pet. 4: 14
The Lord of hosts shall take away.	Isa. 25: 8
His Kingdom then shall greatly grow,	Dan. 7: 27
And over all the nations spread;	Hab. 2: 14
He then will break and crush each foe,	Ps. 2: 9
And bruise the cruel serpent's head.	Gen. 3: 15
This is the stone the builders saw—	Ps. 118: 22
With vile contempt they passed it by;	Acts 4: 11
Yet Christ will reign with righteous law	Isa. 9: 7
On David's throne exalted high.	Luke 1: 32
The ransomed Church, then gathered home,	Luke 13: 29
The ripened fruit of earth and time,	Ps. 50: 4, 5
With songs shall unto Zion come,	Isa. 35: 10
From every age, from every clime.	Matt. 24: 31
Then the new song of praise shall be	Rev. 5: 9, 10
To Him that sitteth on the throne,	Rev. 3: 21
Who by His word hath made us free,	Rev. 7: 14
And ever dwells among His own.	Rev. 7: 15
Come, Thou Desire of Nations, come!	Hag. 2: 7
The spirit cries within our heart.	Rev. 22: 17
O bring the New Jerusalem!	Rev. 21: 2
Then may we see Thee as Thou art.	I John 3: 2

Meditations

On the Word

"We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3: 14).

In times of emergency, such as a fire or a flood, people are sometimes forced to make hazardous moves to reach safety. One of these may be to walk across a narrow bridge high above the ground. The fearful thought of such an undertaking is all but paralyzing to the inexperienced, but when a suitable handrail is provided the fear is removed. Reasoning on the subject, we must conclude that most of us can cross the narrowest bridges over the most treacherous places with comparative ease if we have something to hold on to.

This truth applies equally to the "narrow bridges" which often confront us along life's way. We need a "handrail," something to hold on to which will give us confidence to cross the uncertain places without falling.

In our Christian experience we shall, sooner or later, be confronted with "narrow bridges" which must be crossed. That is the way God works with men. That is how our characters are tested. These tests may come in various ways to different individuals, and may differ in severity, but in all cases they require power and poise to cross. Some of these "narrow bridges" or tests may be as follows: Sickness in one's self or in the family, bereavement, financial losses, temptation, despondency, etc.

Whatever the bridge, God provides a "handrail" that we may grasp and make our way across in safety. The one thing we may hold on to, though all else seems to fail, is His Word. It is faith in God's promises that gives confidence to face any hardship with courage.

In our earthly affairs many of us find it difficult to stand alone. We want the support of our brethren and the encouragement of our family and friends; some strong arm to grasp and lean upon. How much more when it comes to spiritual matters! Because of our feeble strength we need to cling to the Lord. When faced with severe temptations or some overwhelming disaster we would be broken completely were we not in possession of the strong confidence and hope in the Lord. If we do on our part and hold on to what God has furnished us, He is faithful and will not forsake us. In temptation He provides a way of escape that we may be able to bear it (I Cor. 10: 13). When we prove worthy of His help He comes to the rescue. This thought was expressed most beautifully by a man of God many years ago: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33: 27).

The trouble with many individuals is that they seek a "handrail" only when they are in trouble. When all goes well they forget the need of God. Only when the way narrows and their equilibrium is threatened do many people stretch out their hands and cry to be led over in safety.

It is the will and the command of God that we seek or provide beforehand for emergencies which are sure to arise. The prophet of old cried out: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isa.

55: 6). While we have life and opportunity is the time to provide for the future. God is merciful, it is true, and He promises to deliver His children out of all their troubles (Ps. 34: 17), but He makes no provision to save the class which deliberately refuse to listen to Him and spurn His pleadings when their circumstances are favorable.

This thought is clearly expressed by the Wise Man: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded; . . . I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. . . . Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me" (Prov. 1: 24-28). It is a serious matter to reject the Lord when He calls.

But how different is the state of the individual who turns to the Lord at His call. The Psalmist expressed it thus: "I have chosen the way of faithfulness, I set thy ordinances before me. I cleave to thy testimonies, O Lord" (Ps. 119: 30, 31, R.S.V.). This is the way to life—cleave to His testimonies by obeying them. We may stretch out our hands to God; we may utter numerous prayers; we may sing countless songs of His goodness and mercy, but nothing will win His help in the hour of need as does the keeping of His testimonies.

We who enjoy so many blessings, spiritual and material, are in constant danger of trusting or holding on to uncertain riches. In writing to Timothy, Paul counseled certain ones: "They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed" (I Tim. 6: 18, R.S.V.). A store of good deeds now gives us hope and strengthens our confidence concerning the eternal riches.

But that hope and confidence is something we do need to hold lest it slip away from us. Our text stresses the thought that we need to hold this confidence as we did in the beginning of our Christian life. At that time the beauties of the Word shone in fresh brilliance; the promises of God thrilled us; we were enraptured by the thought of Jesus' soon return and our meeting Him. At that beginning we were filled with hope, faith, and zeal. We felt ready for any test.

But the danger to relax and forget, to let the hope slip and faith to weaken is ever present. Many have found this to be so to their sorrow. We have the "handrail," let us not neglect to use it, nor think we are safe without it. That is as childish as the boy riding a bicycle with his hands off the handle bars. To be partakers of Christ it is necessary to hold this confidence we had at the beginning unto the end. If we do it, it will be as a handrail to us, and we can cross any difficulty and share with Christ His life and destiny.

Put forth your hand and grasp the hand of God,
And hold it firm in confidence and trust;
Hold it in faith, for He is kind and just;
Hold it, while yet you tread this earthly sod.
Hold fast to Christ, mark well the way He trod,
His treasures are secure, untouched by rust;
Hold to His Word, 'twill lift you from the dust
And be your refuge, comfort, staff and rod.
His hand will lead you safely through the day,
Through cares and strife and dangers of the night,
And shield from every foe along the way.
Your doubts will end in moments of delight,
In days of peace for which you often pray,
And through the mists you will be walking right.

Your Questions Answered



BIBLICAL PERSONAL CURRENT

Do you have a question? Personal replies to Biblical questions will be sent to any correspondent, and counsel will be offered on problems pertaining to the spiritual life. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will publish only the most helpful discussions for the benefit of other readers. No names shall be mentioned.

Is it true that Jesus' mission was to make known His Father's name which is Jehovah, and to tell of His Kingdom here on earth?

Jesus' mission was to declare the way of salvation and to show us a perfect example. The preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God in which He is to be King was an important part of His ministry. (See Luke 8:1; John 18:37.) During His ministry and also after His ascension He often stated He would return and establish His Kingdom (see Luke 19:12; Rev. 22:12).

He nowhere stated that the Father must be addressed or spoken of as Jehovah. The name of the Father He made known is the truth of God which He proclaimed. In Rev. 19:13 His name is defined as the "Word of God"; and Jesus said Paul was His chosen vessel to bear His name before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). The name signified the Gospel which Paul preached.

In John 17:20 Jesus said, "I have declared unto them thy name," but this is clearly qualified in chapter 15:15, "All things I have learned of the Father I have made known unto you."

Will people in the world to come be flesh and blood?

In the world to come the Bible teaching is that those who are privileged to reach that state, shall be real beings. Paul does say "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50), but this "flesh and blood" signifies our mortal state which is corruptible. Paul also states (v. 51), "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Note this: "*we shall all be changed*"! We cannot explain the nature of the immortal body, but it shall greatly surpass our present mortal condition.

Why is Jesus called "Son of man" and "Son of God" interchangeably?

Jesus was called the Son of God in that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20). This does not alter the fact that He was like mankind in nature; He was mortal, subject to pain, temptation, and death, fittingly called the "Son of man." He was "made of a woman," "made like unto his brethren," "tempted in all points like as we are" (Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:17; 4:15).

In reality it was Christ's victorious living that justified His right to the title "Son of God." By virtue of a righteous life, we likewise become eligible to that same title: "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," if we meet the qualifications of II Cor. 6:17. See Rom. 8:14.

Please explain Ecclesiastes 7:16, 17.

The text reads: "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?"

Various terms used in the Bible have double meaning, as, for example, "riches." One is "rich in good works" (I Tim. 6:18); another, rich in his own ways (Rev. 3:17). Both are termed "rich," and the distinction must be discerned from the context.

June 1, 1957

So in the problem text, *self-righteousness* is implied, and not godly righteousness, for no Biblical command limits or restricts genuine righteousness. Be not self-righteous—smug, arrogant, conceited—over much ability, knowledge, or possessions, the Preacher advises. Neither can these same assets be considered license to stoop to wickedness. Verse 18 gives the correct attitude toward life: "He who stands in awe of God shall *avoid both extremes*" (Moffatt). The "middle of the road," moderation, will keep the Christian free from either excess, the inflated self-righteous ego, and the equally perilous degrading wickedness.

The good Shepherd leaves the 99 self-righteous, to find the one truly righteous.

What does the Bible say about the virgin birth and the immaculate conception? Are they the same thing?

No. The virgin birth has reference to the birth of Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary. We read: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. . . . And [Joseph] knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son" (Matt. 1:18, 25).

The Bible says nothing about the immaculate conception, which is a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, teaching that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was preserved from every taint of sin from before her birth. This teaching the church gets wholly from tradition, which they admit is its origin.

We do not accept this as Truth, for the Scriptures—not tradition—which furnish us all knowledge necessary for salvation (II Tim. 3:15—17), teach us that perfection of character is a growth (Eph. 2:21; II Thess. 1:3; I Pet. 2:2). There were no exceptions, even Christ had to learn obedience (Isa. 7:15; Heb. 5:8, 9).

At what age is it best to begin teaching children about God and the Bible?

This important training in a child's life should begin as early as the child is able to understand anything. He should feel the kindness and see the good example of parents, which are preparatory steps in teaching. This subject may be best summed up in the thought that when a child is grown it should not remember any time in its past when it knew not about God.

Please explain Revelation 14:3, 6. Do not these verses show that the 144,000 will be in heaven while other people will dwell on earth?

The 144,000 are the faithful of the 6,000 years who will reign with Christ for 1,000 years. Christ will establish His capital in the city of Jerusalem, for He spoke of it as "the city of the great king" (Matt. 5:35). The law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3). Christ's co-rulers will definitely be with Him. According to their own testimony (Rev. 5:9, 10), as kings and priests they "shall reign on the earth."

After the 144,000, the "firstfruits," are gathered in and rewarded the gospel will be preached to the nations of earth (ch. 14:6), and they will be given full opportunity to turn to the Lord. They shall become a great multitude which no man can number. These are the subjects of the Kingdom and the 144,000 kings and priests shall rule over them. Both the rulers and subjects will dwell on earth and fill it with the glory of God.

THE JOY OF THE GODLY

PSALM 84

How lovely is Thy dwelling-place
 O Lord of hosts!
My spirit longs and pines
 For the courts of the Lord.
My heart and my flesh give a shout of joy
 For the living God!

Even the wren has found a house,
 And the swallow a nest for herself,
 Where she may put her young,
Even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts,
 My King, and my God.
How happy are those who dwell in Thy house,
 Ever praising Thee!

How happy are the men whose strength is in Thee;
 The highways are in their minds!
Those who pass through the valley of Baca
 Make it a region of springs;
 The winter rain covers it with blessings.
They go from strength to strength,
 The God of gods is seen in Zion.

O Lord, God of hosts, hear my prayer;
 Give heed, O God of Jacob!
 O God, our Shield, behold
And look upon the face of Thine anointed!
 For better is one day in Thy courts
 Than a thousand elsewhere;
I would rather stand as a doorkeeper in the
 House of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield.
Favor and honor the Lord bestows;
He does not withhold prosperity from
 Them that walk in integrity.
 O Lord of hosts,
How happy is the man who trusts in Thee!

